



Environmental Education Services to EPA Offices

Office of Environmental Education

What is Environmental Education?

Environmental education in EPA can be viewed as a continuum of activities. These activities can be described as awareness building; outreach to the public and the regulated community; information dissemination and technical assistance; critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making; and responsible and knowledgeable action. Each of these aspects of environmental education is necessary to translate awareness into responsible action.

The goal of environmental education is to provide the public with awareness and knowledge about environmental issues and the skills needed to make informed and responsible decisions. Environmental education helps individuals analyze an environmental issue to make informed and responsible decisions. Environmental education does not advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action.



Why is Environmental Education Critical to Environmental Protection?

The informed and responsible participation of the public in the decision-making process is integral to the achievement of national environmental goals, such as clean air and water, safe food, and toxic-free communities. EPA cannot achieve its public health and environmental protection goals without the informed and responsible participation of the public. Without high quality information and environmental education to provide the knowledge and skills the public needs to understand the complexities of environmental protection, citizens cannot be equal partners in protecting the environment. Environmental education provides an opportunity to bring government officials, business and industry, community groups, and the public together in a non-threatening, non-controversial way to develop a consensus for resolving environmental problems.

What is EPA's Office of Environmental Education?

EPA's Office of Environmental Education (OEE) was formed after passage of the National Environmental Education Act of 1990. OEE is part of the Office of Communications, Education, and Media Relations, located in the Administrator's Office. The Headquarters staff includes environmental education and program management specialists. Each of EPA's 10 regional offices has an environmental education coordinator who implements OEE programs as well as regional environmental education initiatives.

One goal of EPA is to increase the public's awareness and knowledge of environmental issues and to provide the public with the skills needed to make informed decisions and take responsible actions. The mission of OEE is to advance and support education efforts that develop an environmentally conscious and responsible public and inspire personal responsibility in caring for the environment.

Each headquarters and regional office develops and supports environmental education related to specific legislative mandates and needs. OEE works to meet the needs of the environmental education field through a number of programs conducted under legislative authority. OEE also helps define the role of EPA and the federal government in environmental education, and is focusing on improving internal EPA communication and collaboration of environmental education activities across EPA.

What Do OEE and the Regional Environmental Education Coordinators Do for the Public?

- Award grants for environmental education projects at the national, state, and local levels
- Train education professionals to develop and deliver environmental education programs
- Support post-secondary students and encourage careers in environmental protection through fellowships
- Recognize the achievements of young people who make environmental contributions to their local communities
- Provide leadership and facilitate communication and collaboration on environmental education within the federal government through networking and resource sharing with other federal agencies
- Work in partnership with nonprofit organizations and educational institutions who are interested and involved in environmental education
- Facilitate links among and improve access to quality environmental education materials and information through electronic on-line databases like EE-Link (<http://eelink.net/>) as well as the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and the Eisenhower National Clearinghouses

What Can OEE Do for Headquarters and Regional Offices?

- Provide consulting services such as:
 - Outreach to the EE community
 - Review and management of EE grant programs
 - EE program development and management
 - Development of educational materials and activities by providing help in:
 - Defining need, priorities, target audience, message, program delivery, success, and how to evaluate success
 - Facilitating communication with and development of partnerships
 - Identifying existing programs and materials
 - Reaching under-served audiences
 - Identifying and leveraging resources
- Provide review services such as:
 - EE materials produced or supported by EPA
 - Application of guidelines developed by EE experts

Headquarters Office of Environmental Education



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For additional information, visit the World Wide Web at
<http://www.epa.gov/enviroed>

